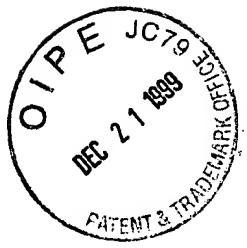
a second strip of said sealing material formed in a loop, said second strip having an outer periphery and an inner periphery greater than the outer periphery of said first strip; and



at least one spoke of said sealing material extending between said first strip and said second strip, wherein the outer periphery of said second strip includes a concave notch for receiving a thickness gauge, and wherein the outer periphery of said second strip also includes, opposite said notch, a corresponding convexity adapted for substantially maintaining the strength of said second strip at the location of said notch.--

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed July 23, 1999. Apparatus claims 1 - 38 and 42 - 54 have been canceled, without prejudice, and replaced with new claims 55 - 92. Method claims 39 - 41 have also been cancelled, without prejudice. The replacement claims are to clarify and explicate the claimed subject matter.

Brief Discussion of the Pertinence of the Cited References

Smith, U.S. Patent No. 4,002,344, proposes an inner ring 22 surrounded by a snap-in outer ring 31. There are no spokes between the inner ring and the outer ring.

Hubbard, U.S. Patent No. 1,942,704, proposes only a single sealing element 21. Mastin, U.S. Patent No. 1,245,002 ("Mastin"), proposes a disk of substantially uniform thickness formed with a central hole, a port-hole and bolt-holes, and which may include narrow ribs or ridges that

extend from the disk. Mastin does not propose strips of sealing material formed in loops with spokes or void spaces therebetween.

The Examiner states that Oberhuber, U.S. Patent No. 1,869,577 ("Oberhuber"), discloses a gasket 20 comprising a strip 23 of sealing material in a loop and at least one notch 24 in the outer periphery. Actually, Oberhuber proposes concentric annular sealing rings 20. Page 2, lines 18 - 20. Each of these rings is under-cut at 22 (Page 2, lines 24 - 25), the feature 22 being described as a "groove or convexity" (Page 2, line 71) rather than a notch. Another convexity or rib 24 is formed about the outer circumference of each ring (Page 2, lines 70 - 75). Oberhuber does not propose notches adapted for receiving a thickness gauge or any other purpose.

The Examiner cites Tucker, U.S. Patent No. 5,052,699 ("Tucker"), and Minor, U.S. Patent No. 5,581,019 ("Minor"), for features that are not found in the new claims. Wainer, U.S. Patent No. 5,472,214 ("Wainer"), is not believed to be prior art; however, it proposes only a single strip of sealing material formed in a loop.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that the invention set forth in new claims 55 - 92 patentably distinguish over the references of record. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to reconsider the rejections, allow the remaining claims and pass this case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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